

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Illinois
COUNTY:	Cook
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Alta Vista Terrace 9th Congressional District

AND/OR HISTORIC: Congressman: Sidney Yates

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1 block long street, running north-south, between West Byron Street and West Grace Street. Located approx. 3800 N. & 1050 W., between N. Kenmore on the East & N. Seminary on the West.

CITY OR TOWN: Chicago

STATE: Illinois CODE: 17 COUNTY: Cook CODE: 031

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Street and 40 residences

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Public and multiple private

STREET AND NUMBER: 3800 to 3846 and 3801 to 3847 Alta Vista Terrace

CITY OR TOWN: Chicago STATE: Illinois CODE: 17

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Cook County Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER: Cook County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Chicago STATE: Illinois CODE: 17

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: August, 1960 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER: Washington

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D. C. CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Illinois Cook

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Alta Vista Terrace is a block-long street lined by forty small, single family rowhouses, twenty on each side of the street. Each rowhouse is situated on a lot approximately 24' wide and 40' deep, with a brick party wall 18" thick between them.

On each side of the street are eighteen two-story houses, with two three-story houses occupying the middle of each row. Except for one facade, at 3826, that has been completely altered with false half-timbering, there are twenty types of exteriors, and order in which they occur on one side of the street is repeated on the other side starting from the opposite end.

Stylistically, the exteriors of the houses were carefully designed to emphasize individuality rather than sameness. Details of many of the rowhouses reflect the Classical Renaissance in American architecture that grew out of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Columns, pediments, and pilasters characterize several of the facades. Other details reflect adaptations of various architectural styles--late Gothic and 18th Century Adam, to name a few. In the twenty different Roman-brick facades are to be found such divergent architectural motifs as Doric and Ionic wood pilasters, flamboyant Gothic arches, Palladian windows, stained-and leaded-glass fanlights, bay and bow windows, and a wealth of moldings, brackets, dentils, and festoons. Many eclectic motifs, popular at the turn of the century, decorate the facades.

Some renovation and "modernization" has been done, not all of it in keeping with the original character of the street's design. A number of windows are glass block. Metal awnings are to be found. A few gables and several decorative finials have been removed. Still, for the most part, the exteriors have been little changed in the seventy years the houses have stood.

The floor plans of the thirty-six two-story rowhouses were originally identical, as were those of the four three-story houses. The first floor of each house had an entrance hall, stairwell, and kitchen on one side and a living room and dining room on the other side. The second floor had four bedrooms and a bathroom. The top floor of the three-story houses was designed to have four additional bedrooms, mention has been made of this top floor in some cases having been used as a ballroom. Each house had a full basement.

Most of the interiors have been extensively altered, and several have been restored or renovated within the last decade.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 15th Century

- 16th Century
- 17th Century

- 18th Century
- 19th Century

20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Aboriginal
- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation

- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music

- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation

- Urban Planning
- Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hidden away in a nondescript neighborhood, Alta Vista Terrace as a street out of the past, a block-long microcosm of turn-of-the-century charm and dignity and architectural eclecticism. Begun in 1900 as one of the last real estate developments of Samuel Eberly Gross, Chicago's merchant prince of additions and subdivisions during the last two decades of the 19th Century. Its fascinating history endows it with a link to the past full as important and interesting as its architectural link.

Joseph and Caroline Kirkland wrote in The Story of Chicago, published in 1894, "Of those who have contributed so much to the growth of Chicago by offering cheap suburban building sites to all who chose to buy, Samuel Eberly Gross stands easily at the head." Gross was highly successful and unusually energetic real estate entrepreneur whose additions, subdivisions and suburbs contributed to the rapid growth of Chicago and the area to the west in the 1880's and 1890's.

After the Panic of 1873, when trade revived and the city began its resurgence of growth, Gross, a lawyer by profession, decided to make real estate his business. By the early 1880's he was feverishly engaged in platting subdivisions and operation under a very attractive system--that of building homes for people of modest means and selling the homes for small down payments and monthly installments.

Gross achieved spectacular success, which he attributed to public will and "superior business methods". At the height of the land boom in 1890, his firm is said to have sold up to 500 lots a week and transported as many as 3000 people in twenty-seven railroad cars in one day to inspect his West Side properties. In 1891, Gross served as treasurer of the Chicago Real Estate Board. By 1894, he had sold 40,000 lots, built and sold 8000 homes and store buildings, and established eighteen subdivisions and suburbs. His fortune was estimated at 3 to 5 million dollars.

During all this frenzy of buying, selling, and building, Gross, who also served as a director of the Chemical National Bank and the Columet Electric Railroad, did not neglect his cultural, social, or civic life. He made trips to Europe, including a visit to the Paris Exposition in 1889, and traveled to the West Coast, Mexico, and the Orient. He was a patron of the Art Institute of Chicago and various philanthropic societies and a member of several prestigious clubs.

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8.
It was in 1900, after returning from Europe, that Gross bought the block that became Alta Vista Terrace. It appears that as a result of looking at row-houses in London, he decided to make Alta Vista as nearly like a block of English rowhouses as possible. The property was bounded by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad on the west and an alley on the east; to avoid having his houses face either of these, Gross ran a narrow street down the middle of the plat and built a row of houses on each side of it.

Called by the Historic American Buildings Survey, the "Street of 40 Houses," Alta Vista is a narrow, tree-shaded way lined on both sides with rowhouses having an Old World feeling.

The houses on Alta Vista Terrace were substantially built and have been occupied by substantial families--not necessarily families of wealth or prominence, but families who regarded a home as a more or less permanent investment to be enjoyed and cared for. A number of the original owners lived on Alta Vista for the rest of their lives.

The present homeowners speak proudly of Alta Vista Terrace. In 1969, they received an award from the Chicago Beautiful Committee. The award praised the street for the way man-made hardness and naturalness of plant material compliment each other. "The overall effect suggests that building and plant grew together."

The houses in general are well cared for; the shrubbery and planting in the front yards are well tended, and the character of the street has been retained. Alta Vista provides a refreshing breathing space at the edge of an area increasingly domineered by crowding high-rises, truly an oasis in a neighborhood showing in spots the effects of neglect, age, and inevitable litter and confusion caused by its proximity to Wrigley Field. To walk down such a street--or even just to catch a glimpse of it from the cross-street at either end--is to be transported briefly to a segment of Chicago's past that is worth remembering.

Alta Vista Terrace is a beautiful example of a situation where each house, individually, might not be outstanding but where the street, taken as a whole, is unique in Chicago.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Album of Genealogy and Biography, Cook County, Illinois. Chicago: Calument Book and Engraving Company, 1896. pp. 382-385.

Dedmon, Emmett. Fabulous Chicago. New York: Random House, 1953. pp. 216-218.

Gross, Samuel E. The Merchant of Cornville. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Privately printed by University Press, 1896.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes
NW	41°	57'	10"	87°	38'	58"						
NE	41°	57'	10"	87°	38'	56"						
SE	41°	57'	05"	87°	38'	56"						
SW	41°	57'	05"	87°	38'	58"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.9

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mrs. Susan S. Benjamin

ORGANIZATION: Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks DATE: July 7, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:
320 North Clark Street, Room 800

CITY OR TOWN: Chicago STATE: Illinois CODE: 17

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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9.

S. E. Gross, Dealer in City and Suburban Real Estate. Chicago:
Undated.

Houses for Sale on Alta Vista Terrace, by S. E. Gross, Sixth Floor
Masonic Temple, State and Randolph Streets, Chicago. Chicago:
Undated.

Kirkland, Joseph, and Kirkland, Caroline. The Story of Chicago.
Vol. II Chicago: Dibble Publishing Company, 1894. pp. 369-372

Mayer, Harold M. , and Wade, Richard C. Chicago: Growth of a
Metropolis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. pp.155,174,
263-267.

Tenth Annual Illustrated Catalogue of S. E. Gross, Famous City
Subdivisions and Suburban Towns. Chicago: 1890.

U. S. Department of The Interior. Historic American Buildings Survey.
Washington, D. C.: National Park Service, Office of Archeology
and Historic Preservation, 1960.

One inventory form, including historical data

PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS:

"Gross, 'Prince of Cornville,' Dead," Chicago Tribune, October 25,
1913. p. 5.

"Samuel E. Gross Dies. Real Estate Operator Who Sued Edmond Rostand,"
New York Times, October 25, 1913. p. 13